

For Immediate Release
Alaska Department of Public Safety
State Fire Marshal's Office

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Alaskan Fire Deaths Continue to Decline in 2003

Seven Alaskans died from fire in 2003. This is an incredible reduction from the 10-year average of 18 deaths. Five of the deaths were in Anchorage, one in Nome and one in Delta Junction. This is the lowest number of fire deaths Alaska has experienced since recording began in 1961. The previous lowest number was 9, in 2002. Alaska has consistently ranked in the top ten for deaths from fire.

The Division of Fire Prevention attributes the lowering of fire deaths to increasing fire safety education programs by fire departments around the state and an increasing awareness of responsible fire practices.

The number one cause of fire deaths for 2003 was smoking while under the influence of some type of substance such as alcohol or prescription medication. The fires were caused by smoking materials but the death was caused by the person's inability to escape the fire.

A child playing with a lighter caused the only child death. Five of the deaths are attributed to smoking materials such as careless smoking or improperly discarding cigarettes. Investigators were unable to determine the cause of the sixth fire death.

Here are a few fire safety reminders from the Division of Fire Prevention

1. Keep matches and lighters away from children.
2. Smoke outside.
3. Dispose of smoking materials in a metal container or deep ashtray.
4. Use caution when smoking while consuming alcohol or prescription medication.

The Division of Fire Prevention reminds you to help keep your family safe by preventing fires in your home. Let's make 2004 a year free of fire deaths.